

REMARKS

Applicant has carefully reviewed the Examiner's rejections and comments as found in the Office Action dated 29 June 2006 and provides the following remarks regarding the Office Action. Claims 1 - 22 are pending in this application.

Claim Rejection - 35 USC §112, First Paragraph

The Examiner has rejected Claims 1 - 17 under 35 U.S.C. §112, First Paragraph as failing to comply with the written description requirement. This rejection is respectfully traversed. The Applicant has amended Claim 1 to clarify that the dimension is a "cross-sectional width." In establishing a disclosure, an applicant may rely not only on the specification and drawings. MPEP 608.04 Figures 6 - 8 show the shaft and recessed portions of the shaft having an inherent geometric shape, thus having an inherent cross-sectional width. Thus the original patent application necessarily discloses that functionality. MPEP 2163.07(a). This would be instantly recognized by persons of ordinary skill in the art. Claims 11 - 17 have been canceled. Thus, it is believed that the Examiner's rejection has been overcome.

Claim Rejection - 35 USC §103(a)

The Examiner rejected Claims 11, 16, and 17 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Pat. No. 2,205,769 issued to Sweetland ("the Sweetland reference"). Further, the Examiner rejected Claims 13 and 14 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over the Sweetland reference in view of U.S. Pat. No. D320,375 issued to Bruce ("the Bruce reference"). In addition, the Examiner rejected Claim 15 as being unpatentable over the Sweetland reference in view of U.S. Pat. No. 6,328,617 issued to Gunnell ("the Gunnell reference"). This rejection is respectfully traversed. Claims 11 - 17 have been canceled. Thus, nothing further is believed to be necessary to respond to the Examiner's rejection.

Claim Rejection - 35 USC §103(a)

The Examiner rejected Claims 1 - 6, 9, 10, and 18 - 22 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Pat. No. 6,796,862 issued to Abbenhouse et al. ("the Abbenhouse reference") in view of the Sweetland reference. This rejection is respectfully traversed. For a *prima facie* case of obviousness to be established, the Examiner must show that one or more references that were available to the inventor meet three basic criteria. First, there must be some suggestion or motivation, either in the references themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art to modify the reference or to combine reference teachings. Second, there must be a reasonable expectation of success. Finally, the prior art reference (or references when combined) must teach or suggest all the claim limitations. MPEP 2142 Applicant respectfully

submits that the Abbenhouse reference in view of the Sweetland reference neither forms the basis of nor establishes a *prima facie* case of obviousness.

The Abbenhouse reference does not teach a blade with a skeleton that has at least one rib that extends distally from the longitudinal centerline of the skeleton to the outer periphery of the blade and ending substantially at said outer periphery of said blade to reinforce the blade both longitudinally and laterally. The Abbenhouse reference discloses two branches 43 and 44 that “diverge out toward the blade tip 39, but terminate short of the blade tip 30.” (Col. 3, Lns. 18 -20) As can be seen from Figures 1A and 1B of the Abbenhouse reference, the branches do not extend distally from the longitudinal centerline of its body towards the outer periphery of the paddle blade where they end substantially at the out periphery of the paddle blade. Thus, these branches do not provide the same magnitude of lateral and longitudinal support to the blade tip and outer tips of the blade as the skeleton and ribs of the present application.

Claims 1 and 18 has been amended to include the limitation that the skeleton has at least one rib that extends distally from the longitudinal centerline of the skeleton to the outer periphery of the paddle blade and ending substantially at said outer periphery of said blade. Thus, the Abbenhouse reference does not teach the ribs of a skeleton as disclosed and claimed in the present application.

The Sweetland reference does not teach a blade with a skeleton that has at least one rib that extends distally from the longitudinal centerline of the skeleton to the outer periphery of the blade to reinforce the blade both longitudinally and laterally. Therefore, the combination of the Abbenhouse reference and the Sweetland reference do not teach each and every claim element as found in the amended independent Claim18.

For the reasons stated above with respect to the Abbenhouse reference in view of the Sweetland reference, and in light of amended independent Claim 18 Applicant respectfully submits that these two references do not form the basis of a *prima facie* case of obviousness of independent Claim 18. Therefore, it is believed that Claim18 are allowable under 35 U.S.C. §103(a). Claims 2 – 6, 10, and 19 – 22 depend from and include all the limitations of amended Claim 18, thus they are also believed to be allowable under 35 U.S.C. §103(a).

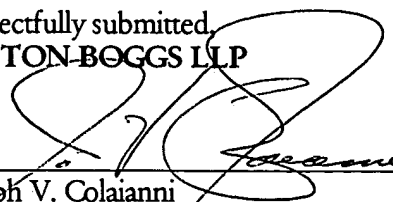
In view of the above amendments and remarks, Applicant believes the pending application is in condition for allowance. Applicant believes no fee is due with this response. However, if a fee is due, please charge our Deposit Account No. 50-0709, under Order No. 022306.0101PTUS from which the undersigned is authorized to draw.

Application No. 10/822,159

Docket No.: 022306.0101PTUS

Respectfully submitted,
PATTON BOGGS LLP

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By: 
Joseph V. Colaianni
Registration No.: 20,019
(202) 457-6174
(202) 457-6315 (Fax)
Attorney for Applicant

Customer No. 41434